

Hello

by ibrokeeverything

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Summary: "Ballng his fingers into fists, Ash shut his eyes, trying to will himself to sleep. He knew that it wouldn't be successful, but he just wanted sleep more than anything. Anything but the red-haired trainer that was the cause of his misery. Every time he closed his eyes, her image was bright and clear." Pokeshipping
Fic

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Staring up at the sky, Ash let his eyes drift over the specks of light against the inky blackness. The expanse of the sky was so massive, he felt miniscule in comparison. Like the world could swallow him up at any moment. Hearing Brock shift next to him, his head snapped to the side, watching the navy sleeping bag disturb the grass it laid on. Letting out a sharp breath, he made an attempt to relax.

Ash hadn't been sleeping very much for weeks. It had been getting worse over a month or so. It all started out with him just taking a few minutes longer to get to sleep. He hadn't given it any thought until he was awake several hours into the night. His nerves were shot and everything was setting him on edge. Earlier in the week Dawn had made a comment about how jumpy he was being.

Ballng his fingers into fists, Ash shut his eyes, trying to will himself to sleep. He knew that it wouldn't be successful, but he just wanted sleep more than anything. Anything but the red-haired trainer that was the cause of his misery. Everytime he closed his eyes, her image was bright and clear. Instead of fighting, he allowed the memories to consume him, each a glistening star, just like the one suspended above his head.

Cold nostalgia chilled him to bone. Misty brought so much warmth into his life, with her fiery demeanor that was as vibrant as her hair. All that was missing now. When she left, she tore a piece of him away as well. He wasn't whole without her by his side. That became more apparent with each passing day.

It stung when she left. He expected that, for he had grown used to her presence with their time together. As they learned each other's habits and quirks, he began to draw comfort from the tomboyish trainer. He then began to rely on her. She was his rock. When the world started to test him, she was always there, helping him get up when when he was down. Then she was gone. Ash's world had been turned upside down. Sure, the comfort of Brock's familiarity helped, but he just wasn't the same.

Time passed and the sharp pain ebbed away into a dull ache. Ash had been able to carry on without thinking of her every time he saw a creek or stream. He didn't feel empty at the sight of a lake anymore. But one night, while staring up at the stars, she began to work her way into his subconscious. That was a mere month ago.

Giving up on sleep, Ash sat up, eyes darting to the campfire that flickered at his feet. The flame was low, bathing their camp in a soft glow, but one that threatened to vanish at a gentle breeze. It was a cool night, the kind that nipped at your skin and cause a shiver to roll down your spine. Not wanting their source of light and heat to disappear, Ash leaned forward, just able to brush the extra wood with his fingers. Straining to grab a piece, he wrapped his fingers around a thick log and set it in the center of the fire. The flames licked at the new log, warming it until it caught fire as well. Satisfied with the quality of the flame, he wrapped his arms around his knees. Ash dropped his chin onto his knees, watching the shadows dancing with the movement of the fire.

Feeling something pushing against his arm, Ash woke with a start. Jolting upright, his eyes flicked around. "Ohâ€¦" He muttered, seeing Brock next to him, and reasoning that the older trainer must have woken him up. At some point he must've fallen asleep when he was watching the fire. Taking in his surrounding, he looked up to the sun, guessing it was about nine o'clock. Usually Brock had them get an early start, getting everyone up as the sun was rising. "Why did you let me sleep in?" Ash questioned, getting up to pack his sleeping bag.

"You needed the sleep." Brock stated simply, packing his own this as well. He'd already put the fire out and gotten most of his things tucked away in his backpack. Dawn was nowhere in sight, probably not far, just blocked by the trees that surrounded them.

"I'm fine," Ash shot back right away, an automatic response. He never wanted any of his traveling companions to worry about him, so he tended to keep any problems to himself. Stretching out his limbs, he winced as he pulled his right arm across his body. Pain shot through his muscles in protest, complaining due to his awkward sleeping position. Shaking out the arm, he got to his feet. There was a dull ache in both his knees as well, for they had been bent at a sharp angle all night.

"No you're not. I know there's something wrong Ash, and there's no point in hiding it. You haven't been sleeping and you've been getting

more and more restless." Brock explained, seeing straight through Ash's lie.

"You know about all that, huh?" Ash ducked his head, not wanting to look Brock in the eye. With all of their time spent together, he had learned to read Ash quite well, usually able to spot any difference in his mannerisms.

"You're not going to tell me what it is, are you?" Brock watched as Ash packed up all his belonging, haphazardly shoving them into his backpack.

"I think I need to sort this out on my own," Ash replied, swinging the pack over his shoulder, gazing out over the path in front of him. Brock gave a curt nod, leaving Ash alone for the time being. He wasn't used to seeing the young trainer this serious, and it was somewhat unsettling.

The trio walked in silence for most of the day, occasionally making a comment about where they were going or what they needed to do. They reached Daybreak City in the early afternoon.

Stepping into the Pokemon Center, the trainers all went to heal any injured pokemon. Passing off their pokemon to Nurse Joy, Brock looked to the other two.

"Want to go get some lunch?" He suggested, now that their pokemon were in safe hands. It was getting late in the day for lunch, the sun past midpoint, starting it's journey down. They had been just about out of food though, and figured waiting until arriving in town would be the best decision.

Dawn quickly agreed, but Ash shook his head. "I have to do something first. I'll get some food on my own," He reassured them, letting them know he'd take care of himself.

"Alright, suit yourself," Brock gave him a quick smile before his friends headed out to find some lunch.

Settling down at one of the video phones, Ash stared into it's reflective surface. Traveling and constantly being out in nature, he didn't get to see his reflection too often. He chocolate eyes lacked their usual spark and his lips weren't curved into a smile. The lack of sleep was evident under his eyes. Letting out a long shaky breath, he punched in a number. The number was ingrained into his memory, for he had repeated it over and over until he knew it by heart. His stomach turned with every ring. He felt like he couldn't breathe until he saw the fiery red hair and heard that voice he'd grown to love. The one that used to berate him about a wrecked bike. The one that yelled out encouragement during battle. The voice that he'd heard into the late hours of the night when one of them couldn't sleep.

Upon hearing the final ring, his heart sank. The electronic voice informing him that the phone was not answered tore at him. Trying again, he dialed that same number. The time between each ring felt like an eternity. He felt his chances of talking to her slip away with each ring. Failing once again, a defeated sigh escaped his lips. Shoulders slumped, he rose to his feet. Ash knew that Misty was probably busy with the responsibilities of a Gym Leader, but he

couldn't help the fact that not being able to reach her hurt. It stung, like salt being rubbed in his wounds.

Weeks passed and the ache never faded. Ash called her every time they reached a new town. She never answered. It was starting to get to him. There was no way it could be coincidence that she never picked up. Sure, Misty had no way of knowing it was him, but he was beginning to think that they were being kept apart. Whether it was fate or destiny, he didn't care. He just needed to talk to her.

Sitting down at a video phone, Ash dialed her number. He had become so practiced at it that he didn't even need to look as his fingers ghosted over the numbers. Letting it ring, his head fell, eyes staring down at his shoes. The device kept on ringing, the shrill sound piercing through the air. Kicking at the ground as the time passed, getting closer and closer to that dreaded final ring, Ash's body drooped, and he dropped his head into the table, resting it on his folded arms.

He stayed like that for what seemed like hours, but was only mere minutes. The phone began to ring, and his head snapped up. Who would be calling the Pokemon Center visitor phone? Answering the phone, he glanced up to the screen.

"Hello?" He asked, waiting for the image to appear. The video could be a little slow to clear itself up sometimes. As the image became visible, he heard a gasp coming through the phone.

"Ash?!" He recognized the voice instantly and stared at the screen with wide eyes. Vivid hair caught his eye, vaguely resembling flames. His eyes snapped to meet emerald ones.

"Misty," His voice broke, all of the pent up emotion released upon seeing her face. Her hand covered her mouth in shock. Thoughts spun around his head, whirring so fast that he couldn't process any of them. His mind went in every direction. There were so many things he wanted to say and so few words.

"I'm sorry," The words came out of his mouth before he could stop them. He wasn't even sure what he was apologizing for, but it felt like the right thing to say.

"Why?" The question came out softly, slightly delayed. Misty took in his image as she spoke. He looked thinner, no longer a little kid. He'd always been on the leaner side, but now that he's grown up it was exaggerated a bit. The first thing she noticed though, was how worn out he looked. She was used to seeing him bright and full of life, sleep or no sleep. He was just missing that spark. As he spoke though, the light was returning to his eyes.

"I don't know. I'm just sorry. For everything," Ash's voice trembled slightly, raw with emotion. He didn't know he was capable of missing someone so much. Or that someone was able to evoke this much emotion from him. It was his turn to look Misty over. Her hair had grown out a bit, causing her ponytail to droop slightly. Her cheekbones were more prominent, and she just looked older, as he expected after not seeing her for years.

"You don't need to be sorry," Her voice was soft and reassuring, so

different than what Ash was used to.

"I really missed you." Just talking to Misty and seeing her felt like it was healing him. He thought time could do that, but it only broke him. Shattered him into smaller and smaller pieces. But seeing her face was starting to mend him. "More than you'll ever know."

"Misty! Come on!" A voice came through the phone. It was muffled, like it was coming from far away. Misty turned in her seat, looking to someone off camera.

"Give me a minute!" She yelled back, focus turning back to Ash. "I really have to go. There's a trainer waiting to battle," She explained, remorse clear in her eyes. "Talk to you later?" She asked apologetically, offering a quick smile.

"Yeah," Ash replied weakly as her image went blurry, and soon faded to black. His body went slack against the desk. He grit his teeth, trying to keep the despair away. It was in vain, though, for a betraying tear slipped down his cheek.

Meeting up with Brock and Dawn an hour or so later, he put on a happy face. No need in worrying them any further when there was nothing they could do to help. There was pain deep within him though. An ache that couldn't be soothed by anything but the redhead who caused. Night was starting to take hold of day, and the sky turned into a muddied navy with hints of grey. Ash was broken out of his internal musing by Brock's voice.

"Ash, what's wrong?" He had asked before, but seemed more serious, more concerned. "You're just not yourself. I've put up with being in the dark for a while, but this is clearly something serious and I would really like to know what the problem is," His tone was demanding, but also soft and compassionate. Ash shifted around on the log he was seated on, eyes cast to the ground. A few beats of silence passed as he debated whether or not he was going to answer the question. A defeated sigh escapes his lips and he flicked his eyes up to Brock and Dawn. Pickachu jumped onto the log beside him, settling there for moral support.

"It's Misty, okay?" He kicked at the dirt, scattering dust and pebbles.

"Care to elaborate?" Dawn questioned, for that wasn't the answer she was expecting. She knew it was serious, but she assumed it would be that he wasn't doing as well as a Pokemon Master as he'd hoped, or something to that extent.

"It's like I'm going crazy. I miss her so much it hurts." Hurts didn't even get close to describing the pain, but he didn't bother elaborating. "So, I called her. She didn't answer, but I know she's busy. I called her again and again, still no answer. And when I finally got ahold of her she was too busy to talk to me. We talked for maybe a minute before she hung up. It's like she doesn't even care." The last words sliced into him. It was something he was still refusing to admit to himself. Saying it outloud made it too real.

"Of course she cares." Brock's reaction was immediate. "She cares about more than anyone else I know, besides maybe your Mom."

"Didn't seem like it," Ash replied stubbornly, eyes once again glued to the dirt.

"I think you need to see her in person Ash," Brock had always know that Ash and Misty were really close, and had that spark. He thought they'd both be too stubborn to admit their feelings though, and would end up as friends forever. He always kind of hoped that they would end up together, but wouldn't dare say it to either of their faces, especially Misty, in fear of getting a beating like no other.

Squinting due to the sun, Ash looked up to a massive Dewgong that laid above the words Cerulean Gym. Brock and Dawn had agreed that he needed to go see Misty. Ash wanted to go, but was worried about missing out on new pokemon and new cities. They'd agreed to stay put until Ash got back, taking a needed rest from traveling.

Sucking in a deep breath, he pushed open the heavy doors. The gym was busy, as always, with people buzzing about. Some were there for gym battles, others to see the Sensational Sister's water shows. Someone was already battling Misty, so he'd have to wait. The waiting played with his nerves. Ash felt like his stomach was full of butterfrees, and his brain was on overdrive. His heart was pounding in his chest.

The trainer who was battling Misty lost, no surprise, for she was quite strong. Ash stepped into the trainer box, eyes locked onto her figure.

"Two Pokemon each, no time limit," She spit out the same things she told every trainer, not looking up from her Pokeballs. Her voice rang out across the arena. "I choose Seadra," She tossed the Pokeball over the water and seadra emerged.

"Would you be surprised if I used Pikachu?" Ash asked, a cheeky grin on his face. Upon hearing his voice, Misty's eyes snapped up from her Seadra.

"Ash!" She exclaimed, running to meet him. Relief and joy flooded through him at that sight. She looked so happy to see him. Enveloping the raven-haired trainer in a hug, Misty buried her head in his neck. "You don't know how happy I am to see you." Her words were muffled by his jacket.

"I know the feeling," He replied, all fear that she didn't care about him leaving his mind. Releasing Misty from his grip, he took a step back, unable to take the smile off his face. His mind raced as they looked at each other, silence settling between the two. "Listen, Misty. There's something I need to say. You might hate me for it, but I need to say it," Ash inhaled sharply, bracing himself for her reaction. "I care about you a lot. And, I missed you like crazy when you left. It was one of the worst weeks of my life. The pain of missing you got worse for a while, but then it got better. I thought it was something that was just going to pass. All of a sudden it got way worse and I couldn't even sleep. I just need you in my life. We're great as friends, but I want to be more than friends," His eyes snapped to hers, trying to gauge a reaction. Her eyes were wide and she looked slightly shocked.

Ash recoiled in pain as Misty smacked him on the side of the head. His hat fluttered to the floor after being knocked off his head. "You don't talk to me for years then show up and tell me you want to be more than friends!" She seethed, anger etched across her features. "What am I supposed to do?" She questioned, glaring daggers at the slightly younger trainer.

"I love you Misty, and I had to tell you," He stated simply, fear creeping into his voice. He didn't know what she was going to do. She could easily push him away, removing herself from his life, and crushing him in the process. He didn't know how he could go on without her. She was already causing many sleepless nights of gazing into a crackling fire, watching the flames dance in the darkness.

Misty's cheeks were burning at this point, and Ash's reflected a similar redness. "Screw it," She muttered, taking a step forward, closing the gap between the two. There were mere inches separating their lips. Ash's eyes darted up to meet Misty's. They were a sea of emerald and turquoise. His gaze flicked to her lips and back to meet her eyes. Making a move, Ash pressed his lips to hers. She let out a muffled gasp, freezing for a moment. Her eyes fluttered shut and she responded, tilting her head slightly. His hands went to her waist, resting against the bare skin that was revealed by her crop top.

Feeling Ash's warm hands touch her bare skin prompted her to thread her arms around his neck, one hand sliding into his thick hair. Deepening the kiss, Ash pulled her body flush against his. Allowing all of the pent up anxiety and emotion to flow out into the kiss, Ash put all of what he had been feeling for the past months into the kiss.

"Misty! I didn't know your boyfriend was coming here," Daisy's voice broke them apart, both panting for air.

"He's not my boyfriend!" Misty replied, the automatic response coming out of her mouth. Daisy had been pestering her about Ash ever since she had made a comment about liking him. She was half asleep when she said it, and hadn't meant to slip up in front of her sister. Glancing back to Ash, she let a smile creep onto her lips. He had an eyebrow raised and a smirk on his lips. She wanted to go kiss it off, but decided to deal with Daisy first. "Okay, I guess he is now, but that means I don't want to hear any more of it from you," She snapped, crossing her arms across her chest.

Ash's smirk shifted into a genuine grin upon hearing Misty accept the fact that Daisy just called him her boyfriend. "Now go and do whatever it is you should be doing," Misty shouted, shooing Daisy away. Turning back to face Ash, she let a smile ghost over her feature. "I love you, you idiot." The words were hardly more than a whisper, but they made Ash feel whole again.

End
file.